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SIPDIS

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CINCPAC FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR, J51 (LCDR FLETCHER),
J45 (MAJ NICHOLLS)

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SUBJECT: Media Reaction: Israeli Withdrawal From Gaza; Dhaka

Summary: Newspaper editorials term the Gaza withdrawal a
move in the right direction. They say that Israel needs to
focus now on the West Bank and Jerusalem issues.

Israeli Withdrawal From Gaza

"Israel leaves Gaza"

Independent English language newspaper "New Age" editorially
comments (8/19):

Part of the reason why Mr. Sharon has decided to leave Gaza
stems from his realization that holding on to the territory
does not really solve his country's security problems. In
the past few years, the activities of Palestinian extremists
such as Hamas have more or less convinced people all around
that sooner or later the Israeli authorities would need to
look inwards about whether or not they need Gaza as part of
the bigger Israel they have in mind. It is now obvious that
the prime minister has accepted fully the thought that
Israel without Gaza will be a better proposition than with
it. In the process, though, Mr. Sharon has had to confront a
rebellion within his own cabinet where extreme rightwing
ministers opted to go out of office rather than go along
with him. On top of everything, it was the finance minister
(and former prime minister) Binyamin Netanyahu who made a
public show of disagreeing with Sharon, eventually making
his way out of government. In his turn, the prime minister
made a shrewd, well-calculated move of inviting the
opposition Labor into a power-sharing arrangement with his
Likud party. The result has been a healthy accommodation
between Mr. Sharon and Mr. Shimon Peres, the veteran
politician now known for his contribution to the peace
process with the Palestinians. Together the prime minister
and Mr. Peres, now the deputy prime minister, have quietly
but insistently been implementing the Gaza withdrawal plan
in its entirety. The alacrity with which the settlements
have been and are being emptied of even the most rabid of
Jews is a sign of the seriousness the government in Tel Aviv
has attached to the issue.

But while the Gaza withdrawal is surely a move in the right
direction, there is the general feeling that Israel needs to
come up with a lot more in its search not only for
accommodation with its Palestinian neighbors but also for
its own security. It is the West Bank which should now be
the focus in any peace consideration. With issues like the
status of Jerusalem remaining in an imbroglio, it is but
natural for people to feel that Mr. Sharon and his friends
must come up with a lot more than they are willing to offer.
A few crumbs here and there will not satisfy the
Palestinians, for crumbs are not the ingredients that go
into the making of a state.

"After Gaza, the West Bank?"

Pro-left English language weekly "Holiday" editorially
comments (8/21):

The withdrawal from Gaza...is welcome. But that does not
mean that it solves all problems for either Israel or the
Palestinians. There is still the matter of what the Israelis
plan to do about the West Bank and the future status of
Jerusalem. The Israeli government has lately demonstrated
what it thinks is its agreement to live with a Palestinian
state beside it. But the way in which it has gone about
promoting the idea has only convinced men like President
Mahmoud Abbas that it expects a Palestine to be established
on the crumbs of territory it has on offer. Obviously, such
an attitude can only exacerbate the issues. Which is why it
is important tha